

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Over the past ten years or so, I have been working on two main topics in political philosophy.

The first topic concerns the proper functions of the modern state. Against the currently fashionable view that the state should strive to be neutral among competing conceptions of the good life, I have sought to present and defend a "perfectionist" view of politics. Perfectionism, as applied to politics, holds that the modern states have a general duty to promote excellence and to assist their citizens in leading valuable lives, even if doing so requires states to undertake political action that is controversial and subject to reasonable disagreement.

The second topic concerns the justification and value of democracy. Against the widely held view that democratic government is justified, at least in part, by principled considerations, I have explored and tentatively endorsed the thesis that democracy is only instrumentally justified, if it is justified at all. Toward this end, I have sought to defend a view I term "complex instrumentalism," and I have tried to show how this view can accommodate many of the good points advanced in defense of democratic political arrangements.

In addition, and as a side interest, I have written a number of papers on John Rawls' political philosophy. I continue to find Rawls' work challenging and intriguing, even as I have sought to defend positions in political philosophy very different from his own.